

PURDUE ROAD SCHOOL

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Transportation Heritage II

Introduction By James M. Turley, Project Manager, Indiana LTAP.

As the 20th century drew to a close, a small group of Indiana citizens, including engineers, historians, and historical association members started a discussion about writing a 20th century history of Indiana highway transportation. The objective was to have a comprehensive work developed in time for the Indiana Bicentennial in 2016. In 1995, an Indiana highway history project was proposed and has been a simmering topic of discussion since that time. A limited literature search was conducted to compile a list of secondary sources. Several oral history interviews have been conducted. Road history displays have been produced for recent Purdue Road Schools, and a transportation heritage seminar was held at the 2002 Road School and a second transportation heritage seminar is being conducted at 2004 Purdue Road School.

A comprehensive history of highway development and research in Indiana is needed to preserve the story and the legacy and to instruct the future, now firmly planted in the 21st century. Preserving this transportation history is as important as saving an iron bridge or building. Indeed, this history is complementary to the preservation of above ground transportation artifacts. The history of highway development in Indiana since the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1916 is an important story not yet told. During this exciting period, the 1937 General Assembly established Indiana's highway research program. Subsequently, collaborative research institutions were built within both Purdue University and the State of Indiana. The antecedents for this effort can be found in Purdue's School of Civil Engineering, the late 19th and early 20th century Office of the Indiana State Geologist, the fledgling Indiana State Highway Commission and its successors, and in private organizations such as the Lincoln Highway Association. Over the years the Indiana highway construction industry has become a partner in the highway development and research effort, and the impact of these groups continues today. A

number of states have published books on transportation history and/or highway research. Examples include Iowa, Texas, and Connecticut.

Our purpose here is to keep this idea of transportation heritage alive in Indiana. This seminar provides another opportunity to do this with two informative and diverse presentations about the subject. One deals with the human involvement of Purdue Professor Charles Ellis in the design of the Golden Gate Bridge. The second will cover transportation archival and collections management and provide some insights into what should be preserved in public and private transportation entities.